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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Country and intercountry programmes and projects

FIFTH INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Note by the Administrator

I. PREPARATORY PROCESS

1. The fifth intercountry programme seeks to put in motion a new pattern of programming: first, to determine a strong framework of thematic development objectives and then to identify the intercountry initiatives within that framework which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-funded technical cooperation is best placed to support. This process has therefore broken with the practice of de facto "project brokering".

2. The programming process began with a brainstorming meeting of experts in January 1990, which prepared the ground for a high-level symposium on cooperation in Asia and the Pacific in May 1990 attended by government officials, heads of regional institutions, academics and other experts. The results of the symposium contributed directly to the drafting in late 1990 of the advisory note for the regional programme for the fifth cycle. The note drew on the report of the symposium as well as on papers and inputs submitted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and several United Nations specialized agencies and organizations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The note was then submitted to a meeting of UNDP Resident Representatives in Asia and the Pacific in October 1990.

3. Following detailed consultations with Governments, a draft of the regional programme document was completed in the summer of August 1991. This document was also widely discussed, in particular by a series of intergovernmental meetings at the subregional level.

4. In the final stage of the process, the draft document was circulated to Governments, United Nations specialized agencies and regional organizations in order to elicit specific proposals for intercountry cooperation within the framework of the programme. All these proposals were comprehensively appraised and a revised version of the programme document was submitted to, and endorsed by, a regional meeting of government aid coordinators in January 1992.

II. ANALYTICAL COMMENTARY ON THE FIFTH INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMME

5. The objectives of the fifth intercountry programme for Asia and the Pacific are based upon the fundamental premise of collective self-reliance. While the countries of the region confront the full gamut of developmental concerns, containing as they do an extraordinary wealth of human, physical and natural resources as well as chronic poverty and degradation, the solutions to many of those concerns are to be found within the region. It is a region which comprises the fastest-growing economies in the world; the largest countries and many of the smallest in the world; more open and less open economies, and those in full transition; countries which stand as good examples of progress in human development and in environmental management, both rural and urban. UNDP and the United Nations system can facilitate the transfer of good practices in the policy, technical and other spheres between countries through South-South cooperation and technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC).

6. Along with its development partners in the United Nations system, UNDP has a unique mandate to develop and implement regional and subregional cooperation for economic and social development. UNDP is the largest of the bilateral or multilateral donors offering technical cooperation to region-wide programmes. At the subregional level, UNDP has built up special relationships with several subregional groupings: the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as one of its few dialogue partners; among the Pacific island countries, where UNDP is active at intercountry and country levels (UNDP has been entrusted with the task of organizing most aid meetings in the form of round-table conferences in the subregion); and recently in North East Asia, UNDP has taken the lead role in developments connected with the Tumen River Basin. UNDP support is especially valued in intercountry issues because of its political objectivity and since it facilitates access to a diversity of views.

7. Based on the experience gained from the fourth intercountry programme, two types of methodological approach will be pursued by individual programmes under the programme. The integrative approach will be followed mainly, but not exclusively at the subregional level. Programmes will endeavour to develop lasting links among countries through the strengthening of

intergovernmental bodies (e.g., the Asian and Pacific Development Centre); support to regional institutions and networks; support to joint resource management (e.g., through the Mekong Committee); and development of common standards and harmonized systems. Under the "common needs" approach, assistance will be provided to countries in areas where they are facing common problems and concerns. Programmes will seek to address each country's concerns while encouraging dialogue and exchange of experience. The fifth intercountry programme will also act as a regional umbrella to support national initiatives.

8. In developing the objectives and strategies for the fifth intercountry programme, it has been necessary to pay special attention to setting priorities and selecting programmes in order to ensure maximum impact from the sharply reduced funding available.

9. The fifth intercountry programme for Asia and the Pacific will concentrate on three thematic areas of concern: human development through poverty alleviation; economic management and reform; and environment and natural resource management.

10. The three priority areas of the programme fully reflect those of UNDP. Human development through poverty alleviation encompasses two of the UNDP areas of focus; poverty eradication and the promotion of women in development. Under this theme, there will be four programme areas:

(a) Management of human development, encompassing health and including a major regional initiative on the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS); basic education as a follow-up to the World Conference on Education for All; and water and sanitation;

(b) Empowerment of the poor, emphasizing community-based approaches to development;

(c) Vocational and entrepreneurial skills for productive employment, aiming to promote small-scale entrepreneurship;

(d) Urban management, helping urban administrations of the region to address concerns of decentralization, resource mobilization, targeted assistance and urban environment.

11. Economic management and reform has both domestic and international dimensions: the former intending to respond to the very important process of transition in development management now ongoing in the region, the latter taking into account the rapidly changing conditions of trade and investment, including the needs of technology transfer. Under this theme there will be seven programme areas:

(a) Macroeconomic policy development, through dialogue and exchange of information taking into account the unique diversity of experience in the region;

(b) Resource mobilization for development, emphasizing financial sector reforms and direct foreign investment promotion;

(c) Strengthening economic management, with special attention to tax and customs administrations;

(d) International trade policy, in the aftermath of the Uruguay Round of multinational trade negotiations and the new global trade climate;

(e) Trade development within the region, to facilitate an expansion of trade in Asia;

(f) Development of export-oriented small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), through assistance in product design, and marketing and support to industry associations;

(g) Strengthening infrastructure for trade and investment, with emphasis on the development of civil aviation, maritime transport, telecommunications and postal systems within the framework of the Transport and Communications Decade for the region, to serve the commercial sector.

12. Environment and natural resource management is almost synonymous with the UNDP area of focus theme of environment and natural resource management. Under this theme there will be five programme areas:

(a) Environmental policy and research, assisting countries to adjust policies in favour of environmental sustainability, to establish common standards and to upgrade their environmental research capabilities;

(b) Environmental technology development and dissemination, encouraging the adoption of technologies that reduce wastage and promote the sustainability of natural resources;

(c) Agricultural resource management, assisting in the adoption of sustainable agricultural, forestry and fisheries practices in fragile ecosystems;

(d) Marine environment, fostering regional cooperation to reduce and control marine pollution and enhance offshore marine resource management;

(e) Disaster mitigation, encouraging cooperation among national administrations in preparing for and responding to natural disasters.

13. Under the three major themes, the concerns of women and development and gender issues will be mainstreamed as a dimension of individual programmes. The programme will continue to support initiatives at the subregional level, including those of ASEAN, SOPAC, South Asia, North East Asia, and Indo-China. Some of the more significant programmes include the poverty alleviation and equitable human development programme for the Pacific, continuing support to the Mekong Committee, and the sponsorship of economic cooperation in North East Asia (Tumen River Basin Development).

14. TCDC will be a key feature, if not actually a condition, of virtually all components of the fifth intercountry programme.

III. MANAGEMENT OF THE FIFTH INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMME

1. Management requirements

15. The programme approach will be adopted extensively for the conception and implementation of all new components of the fifth intercountry programme in contrast to the sector-oriented project approach of the previous cycle. Programmes will be formulated not merely for UNDP funding but in order to elicit funding from other potential sources. Collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will also be promoted wherever appropriate. There will in consequence be major management implications for programme implementation.

16. In the first place, because of the need to address a range of related issues, programmes could involve a number of different organizations and agencies within and outside the United Nations system, according to their relative strengths and expertise. Secondly, and in consequence of the need for more strategic guidance as well as coordination responsibilities, a new system of management will be required. Programme managers, with responsibilities beyond those of traditional chief technical advisers, will be required to mobilize and direct services and inputs from a variety of sources, using more flexible (but still strictly accountable) funding arrangements.

17. Thirdly, through a process of decentralization, UNDP field offices will become more fully involved in formulating, implementing and monitoring regional programmes. Through the Resident Representatives, the relevant government and non-governmental agencies in participating countries will play a more active role. Fourthly, and underlying all of these needs, programmes will utilize more region-based resources, especially those institutions and individual experts available in the region.

18. By dispersing project locations within the region, and establishing linkages with country initiatives, the fifth intercountry programme will be closely involved with and supportive of individual Governments and country programmes. Financial, technical and managerial support to the regional programme will be increased. A major objective will be capacity-building and strengthening, as mandated by Governing Council decision 90/34.

19. Through a process of more intensive consultation at headquarters and at the field level, attempts will be made in the fifth intercountry programme to establish, coordinate and solidify the links among country, regional, interregional and global activities under the three themes.

2. Mobilization of additional resources and coordination arrangements

20. In the light of the sharp reduction in available indicative planning figure (IPF) resources, and in the interests of enhancing donor coordination in the strategic areas of intervention, additional funds for both cost-sharing and co-financing will be sought from other multilateral and bilateral sources. Initial contacts have already been made with potential donors to seek cost-sharing and co-financing in a number of individual programmes, including the Mekong Committee, Tumen River Basin Development, water and sanitation programme, and programmes oriented to trade, transport, energy and enterprise.

IV. RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

21. The regional programme for Asia and the Pacific, as endorsed by the meeting of government aid coordinators in Manila in January 1992, and developed in close consultation with individual Governments and intergovernmental organizations at the subregional level is expected to contribute to enhanced intercountry cooperation at the regional and subregional levels in Asia and the Pacific. The programme is fully compatible with the mandates of UNDP as proposed by the Governing Council in its decision 90/34.

22. The Administrator recommends that the Governing Council approve the fifth intercountry programme for Asia and the Pacific (1992-1996).